

January 23, 2024

Dear Provost Serio, Dean Williamson-Lott, and UW Faculty,

I, along with my colleagues in the College of the Environment Dean's Office, strongly support the Program on the Environment (PoE), and applaud its steady growth over time. In the last decade, the program's undergraduate major in Environmental Studies has become the sole focus of the program (which formerly also managed an interdisciplinary graduate certificate program); a major which now accounts for approximately one quarter of the undergraduate students in our College. Our early realization that the program was burgeoning was one of the reasons we required a new, permanent Associate Director position be created in advance of the current Director's appointment, namely, to assist the Director in managing workflow.

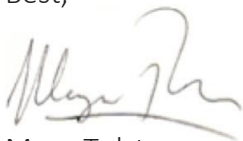
We have worked alongside this PoE leadership to:

- move the major from open to minimum requirements;
- allocate new permanent funding for additional student services positions (which started in 2022) and additional TAs to staff the capstone; and
- create several teaching faculty positions.

Beyond these steps, we have been in conversation with the unit about ways to revise and expand the program to maintain pedagogical excellence in the face of 500+ majors.

PoE leadership have done a commendable job at managing the transition from lecturers to teaching faculty positions, after those latter positions were created by the faculty code. At the same time, PoE leadership have fully explored "next step" options for the program, including status quo (remain a program with faculty academic appointments made through "friendly" academic appointing units), merging with another unit in the College, and moving towards departmentalization. In service of all of these options, the College has begun to allocate additional financial resources to bolster the program, which may ultimately be used to hire additional faculty. However, whether those faculty are teaching track, or are tenure track (likely with joint appointments in disciplinary units) remains to be determined, in large part by the evolving decision this unit makes about future direction and structure, and the reasoning behind it. We welcome that conversation.

Best,



Maya Tolstoy
Maggie Walker Dean
College of the Environment